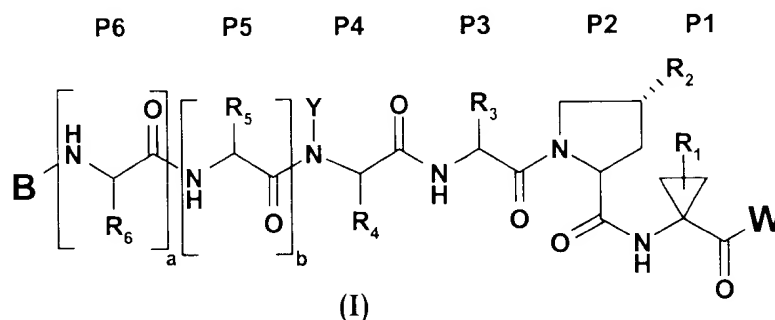


ABSTRACT

Disclosed herein are hepatitis C viral protease inhibitors of formula (I):



wherein **a** is 0 or 1; **b** is 0 or 1; **Y** is H or C₁₋₆ alkyl;

5 **B** is H, an acyl derivative or a sulfonyl derivative;

R₆, when present, is C₁₋₆ alkyl substituted with carboxyl;

R₅, when present, is C₁₋₆ alkyl optionally substituted with carboxyl;

R₄ is C₁₋₁₀ alkyl, C₃₋₇ cycloalkyl or C₄₋₁₀ (alkylcycloalkyl);

R₃ is C₁₋₁₀ alkyl optionally substituted with carboxyl, C₃₋₇ cycloalkyl or C₄₋₁₀

10 (alkylcycloalkyl);

R₂ is CH₂-**R₂₀**, NH-**R₂₀**, O-**R₂₀** or S-**R₂₀**, wherein **R₂₀** is a saturated or unsaturated C₃₋₇ cycloalkyl or C₄₋₁₀ (alkyl cycloalkyl) being optionally mono-, di- or tri-substituted with **R₂₁**, or **R₂₀** is a C₆ or C₁₀ aryl, C₇₋₁₆ aralkyl, Het or (lower alkyl)-Het, all optionally mono-, di- or tri-substituted with **R₂₁**, wherein **R₂₁** is as defined herein;

15 **R₁** is C₁₋₆ alkyl, C₂₋₆ alkenyl or C₂₋₆ alkynyl, all optionally substituted with halogen; and

W is hydroxy or a N-substituted amino; or **W** taken together with the carbonyl group to which it is bonded represents an ester group, or a pharmaceutically acceptable salt thereof.